

HUMAN BEHAVIOR AND INDUSTRIAL SAFETY



"Through experimentation, psychologists have found that learning reinforced by reward is efficient, sure, and complete"

Short-cut hazardous methods or any other unsafe acts must not be rewarded. In fact, in such situations reprimands or punishment should be given. Action must concentrate on the error and not on the personality involved, for to do otherwise would lead to trial-and-error by the individual which is no more satisfactory than the wrong method. In short, wrong methods should be corrected by full and complete explanation and demonstration of the correct work procedures. Such being the case, it also follows that there should be reward reinforcement of the new correct work pattern as soon as feasible.

learning. This can have negative aspects as well: the worker who figures out a hazardous short cut, which produces more units, may be rewarded for an unsafe act.

It is apparent that the employee must be rewarded only for safe work methods. Higher productivity because of good, safe work methods satisfies the need for achievement and recognition. This in itself reinforces the learning of the employee, but also spreads its effect to other employees who see this take place. However, a supervisor, recognizing the same needs, can reinforce this learning through praise for greater productivity and telling the worker how much better he is doing, for example.

Publicity given to a safety record, bonus, a promotion, or anything which satisfies individual needs would serve as a reward to reinforce whatever learning has brought about the desired behavior.

A reward must closely follow the behavior to be rewarded. The praise, for example, should be given at the time the desired behavior occurs, not some long time later. This does not mean it must be instantaneous, but it should be within a reasonable length of time. If delay is necessary, certainly recall to the individual the reason for the reward.

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This principle also applies to participation by employees in a safety program whether it be through suggestion systems, safety committees, problem discussion groups or training sessions. In all these areas a man gains personal worth if his opinions are asked for and graciously received. He feels, too, that he is more than just a "cog," and that he is giving of his creative self as an important member of the "team."

A safety program utilizing the ideas of all, either individually or by representation, satisfies the need people have for being "in the know." In this way, the safety director creates that positive atmosphere of ego-involvement in the program and a sense of obligation and responsibility for its success. Research has demonstrated that when employees do not feel that programs are top-level-planned, but rather come from all, there is far more chance for success.

The rewarding of correct procedures will lead to a more positive attitudinal response on the part of the worker than will punishment. A positive attitude toward training procedures is much to be desired. Both the positive and the negative aspects of reinforcement may "generalize" over the whole